



CLARKE COLLEGE: A FAITHFUL SERVANT

Since Clarke College opened its doors to students in the fall of 1908 (making Clarke Mississippi's oldest junior college), Clarke College has faithfully served our Lord and Mississippi Baptists. It has persevered through the adversities of fire, loss of Convention support (1931-1945), loss of its independent status (1981) and, most recently, loss of its regional accreditation (1991).

A Christ-Witnessing Centered Campus

Throughout its eighty-three years of continuous service, Clarke College has concentrated on training people (clergy and laity) to be bold witnesses for our Lord. Through its doors have passed more than one hundred missionaries, more than one thousand ministers, and thousands of Biblically informed and spiritually awakened Baptist lay men and women. Clarke College graduates have served and are serving faithfully, not only in local churches, but also in positions of responsibility, in the Mississippi Baptist Convention and in the Southern Baptist Convention as well as in faculty positions in our Baptist colleges and seminaries.

A Christ-Centered Campus

The Christ-centered, family-like atmosphere of the Clarke College campus has been fostered over the years through the activities of the Baptist Student Union, Baptist Young Women, Ministerial Association, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and through such activities as the weekly chapel services, Missions Emphasis Week, Spiritual Emphasis Week, and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. Through participation in these organizations and activities, Clarke students are taught Christian principles of thought and action and are encouraged to become bold witnesses for our Lord.

A Christ-Dependent Campus

Clarke College's difficulties with the Southern Association of Colleges and School (SACS) started in 1987 when a SACS committee came to the Clarke College campus for the normal ten-year cycle visit. That committee made thirty-eight recommendations (mandated changes) for Clarke College. In December, 1987 at the annual SACS meeting, Clarke College was put on private probation. In December, 1988, despite the fact that many of these recommended changes had been made, Clarke College was put on public probation. In the fall of 1989 a special committee visited Clarke College, and on His recommendation, the Commission on Colleges of SACS extended Clarke's probation for the second and final year.

In the fall of 1990 another SACS special committee visited the Clarke campus. That committee concluded that Clarke was still deficient in two areas, long-range planning and financial stability. Based on their recommendation, the Level I Criteria and Reports Committee recommended and the Commission on Colleges agreed to drop Clarke College from membership in SACS in December, 1990. Clarke made an administrative appeal of this decision, but the SACS Appeals Committee rejected Clarke's appeal in April, 1991.

Loss of regional accreditation adversely affected Clarke College in two major ways. First, Clarke College

students (after May, 1991) had no guarantee that the work they took at Clarke College would be accepted by other institutions of higher learning. Second, federal student financial aid is tied to having regional accreditation.

The first problem was addressed by Clarke College requesting other institutions of higher learning to make bilateral agreements with Clarke College to continue to accept credits earned at Clarke College as they did before Clarke lost its regional accreditation. Fifteen institutions responded favorably to this request. The second problem was addressed through a bequest in the will of a friend of Clarke College who left approximately \$115,000 to Clarke College to be used specifically for loans to Clarke students and by a special offering for Clarke College taken up in many area churches that has raised nearly \$11,000 to date.

Clarke College is enduring her present adversity through the faithfulness of its administration, faculty, and staff who remained despite the fact they have no contracts, through the faithfulness of her returning students who returned despite the limited choice of institutions to which they could transfer, and through the faithfulness of its alumni and friends who continued their financial and prayer support despite Clarke's present difficulties. But the faithfulness of all three groups would not have been enough to keep Clarke College open this eighty-third year. Clarke has survived because it has "the right Man on her side." That Man is our Lord. Those of us in the Clarke College Family realize that it was through His guidance and His power that Clarke College has, is, and will endure to do His will.

